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## AMERICAN JEWISH RELIEF IN THE WORLD WAR

BY ALBERT LUCAS,

Secretary of the Joint Distribution Committee of the American Funds for Jewish War Sufferers.

Our latest figures show the collections by American Jewry, acting as an entity, in behalf of the Jews in the various War Zones of Europe and Palestine, have totalled, since the beginning of the war in 1914 and up to the present year, approximately \$20,000,000, of which the bulk has been disbursed. There has been but a single distributing agency for the disbursing of this huge sum, namely, the Joint Distribution Committee of the American Funds for Jewish War Sufferers, comprising in its membership representatives of the various committees, whose duty it has been to collect the funds. Upon this Joint Distribution Committee, of which the Chairman is Felix M. Warburg, many well known leaders of Jewry in America have served.

## AMERICAN JEWRY UNITED IN EFFORT

Every section and every shade of Jewish life in America is represented. The men and women who have thus given of their time, of their energy and of their effort, to insure an equitable and wise distribution of the funds secured through the generosity of virtually all the Jews in America, rich and poor alike, are leaders in finance and in the religious and cultural life of American Jewry. Their service has insured, not alone the honest administration of the vast sums placed at their disposal, but likewise its able administration.

To better insure an exact knowledge of the requirements presented by the situation in Europe in its ever changing aspects, there was established by Dr. Boris D. Bogen and Max Senior in the latter part of last year (1917), a branch of the Joint Distribution Committee in Holland. This branch is to be a permanency until the close of the war and will, presumably, be continued long after, for the necessary purposes of rehabilitation. There are also established in various parts of Europe and in Palestine, local Committees, which report to the Joint Distribution Committee, so that it is possible to keep in close, frequent and immediate

touch with the various Jewish Committees in the War Zones, including even those Committees in the "Occupied" districts.

#### BEGAN RELIEF IN FALL OF 1914

American Jews, more quickly than any other body of American citizens, came to the realization in the Fall of 1914, that extensive relief measures would be necessary as a corollary of the war. The American Jewish Committee, which had in its treasury a balance of approximately \$600,000 out of the funds collected for the relief of the victims of the Kishineff massacre, made this sum available for war relief purposes. Other representative Jewish organizations took up the matter of appeals,—among these, and probably the first, being the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the call being sent out at the instance of Albert Lucas and Morris Engelman, Secretaries of the Union.

The relief work took its first organized form on October 4, 1914, when, as a result of the activity of the Union of Orthodox Congregations, the Orthodox Jews of America formed the Central Committee for the Relief of Jews Suffering Through the War, with Leon Kamaiky, publisher of the *Jewish Daily News* of New York, as the Chairman; Harry Fischel, Treasurer; Albert Lucas, Executive Secretary; and Morris Engelman, Financial Secretary.

#### AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE ACTS

Almost immediately thereafter, the American Jewish Committee sent out a country-wide invitation to national Jewish organizations, including the recently organized Central Relief Committee, to appoint delegates to meet in a conference in New York City on October 25. Louis Marshall presided at this meeting, and a Committee of five members was appointed, consisting of Oscar S. Straus, Julian W. Mack, Louis D. Brandeis, Harry Fischel and Meyer London. The Committee of Five was to select a Committee of 100, to be representative of every organization invited to the Conference. Thus was formed the American Jewish Relief Committee, the first officers of which were Louis Marshall, President; Cyrus L. Sulzberger, Secretary; and Felix M. Warburg, Treasurer. In the meanwhile, the Central Committee had already been collecting funds and had sent \$10,000 abroad to Europe and to Palestine.

At a meeting of the American Jewish Relief Committee on

November 22, 1914, it was announced that the American Jewish Committee had voted to transfer the sum of \$100,000 from its emergency trust fund to the Relief Committee, and many large sums were pledged by individuals for the general purposes of relief.

#### ORGANIZATION OF JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

The most important step in the work of Jewish war relief was taken on November 24, 1914, when the Joint Distribution Committee was formed jointly by the American Jewish Relief Committee and the Central Relief Committee, and the People's Relief Committee, which was organized later, also sends its representatives to the meetings of the Joint Distribution Committee.

The year following the beginning of the war, in August, 1915, the People's Relief Committee was formed, the first Chairman of which was Meyer London. This Committee appeals to that section of the Jews of America who are representatives of the laboring classes, and whose contributions are mostly obtained in small sums.

In this way was avoided any possibility of duplication in the transmission of funds abroad, without interfering in any way with the collection of funds by the three constituent committees, which have continued to appeal to those sections of the Jewish community which could best be reached by them respectively. Thus the American Jewish Relief Committee has collected very large sums, mainly among the wealthier Jews of the nation, while the Central Committee has appealed to the Orthodox element and the People's Committee has appealed to the laboring element.

#### HOW FUNDS ARE ALLOTTED

The Joint Distribution Committee has impartially considered all the reports received from all over the world, with details of the distress and suffering caused by the war. They have come not only from Europe but also from Palestine, as well as from parts of Asia and from Africa. The Committee has taken the funds poured into its treasury by the three Committees and has distributed them wherever, in its judgment, it has felt the most good could be done. The Committee meets frequently in New York.

The three constituent committees,—the American, the Central and People's Committees,—have each been organized on a national scale. Each has branches throughout the United States

wherever there are any Jewish communities, and even Jews living in rural districts and single families in the smallest villages are reached.

As a result of this very complete organization, there is virtually not a Jewish man, woman or child in the United States to whom direct appeals have not frequently been made.

#### PER CAPITA CONTRIBUTION ABOVE SIX DOLLARS

It is estimated that in the United States there are approximately 3,000,000 Jewish souls who have contributed to the total sum collected since the beginning of the war, a per capita sum amounting to more than \$6.00 each. There have, of course, been some significantly large contributions, notably \$1,000,000 by Julius Rosenwald of Chicago, and almost equal amounts contributed at different times by such men as Jacob H. Schiff, Nathan Straus, Felix M. Warburg and other leaders in Jewish financial or commercial life. But there have been hundreds of thousands of individual contributions from Jews in moderate circumstances and from those who have had little if anything to spare above their own needs, which have swelled the total to an amount never before contributed to any single cause in the history of American Jewry.

These large sums have been collected not without effort, not without continuous appeals, directed through both the written and the spoken word. Leading Jewish orators have gone to every part of the country to tell the story of the sufferings and privations of the Jews in the War Zones. It has been conceded generally, by others engaged in war relief activities, that the funds collected and disbursed by American Jewry have been administered at a cost far below that of any other fund approximating the Jewish fund in size.

#### REALIZATION OF NEED GROWS

Up to the end of 1915, the sum of \$1,500,000 had been raised through various sources, by the three committees engaged in collecting. It was clearly apparent at this time, that the sum thus far raised was totally inadequate to the needs presented by the constantly increasing devastation of war. It was shown by representative Jews who had been sent abroad, personally to investigate and to report their findings, that European Jewry was threatened with obliteration, was in fact being obliterated through hunger

and want. It was made manifest that only very much greater sums of money than had hitherto been conjectured as necessary, were required to prevent this calamity, and to avert the catastrophe which daily grew more imminent.

It was then determined that the goal of American Jewry in the year 1916 should be not less than \$6,000,000 for relief purposes. At the first of a series of great mass meetings held throughout the country, there was raised in New York City in a single night more than \$400,000 in cash and additional pledges which brought the total for the evening to nearly \$1,000,000.

#### WILSON NAMES JEWISH RELIEF DAY

President Wilson himself recognized the plight of European Jewry and lent his every encouragement to the effort to raise funds, designating January 27, 1917, as a special day for contributions to Jewish war relief funds. President Wilson took this action following the passage in the United States Senate of a resolution introduced by Senator Martine of New Jersey.

Funds have been raised by the various committees according to the methods best adapted to their respective constituents. Thus the Central Committee has made a specialty of appeals on Jewish religious holidays; the People's Committee has collected funds in weekly installments, usually amounting to but a few cents each, while the American Committee has appealed directly to the larger givers.

The most spectacular of the campaigns was that undertaken in New York City in the close of 1917, when approximately \$5,000,000 was raised in an intensive campaign led by Jacob H. Schiff and directed by Jacob Billikopf. A part of this sum was set aside for the Jewish Welfare Board—U. S. Army and Navy—of which Colonel Harry Cutler is the Chairman, and which has for its special function, to minister to the needs of the Jewish men in the military service of the United States, which already number over 60,000.

#### \$10,000,000 GOAL IN 1917

This campaign was the climax of the campaign to raise \$10,000,000, which was the goal set by American Jewry for the year 1917. The statistics show that approximately one-half of the Jewish population of the United States is centered in New York

City, so that by raising \$5,000,000 in the city and \$5,000,000 in the country at large during 1917, a fair division of the contributions was reached.

Since the entrance of the United States into the war, the efforts for the collection of large sums have in no sense diminished, although there has, of course, been a restriction upon their disbursement. The Joint Distribution Committee of the American Funds for Jewish War Sufferers has acted in close coöperation with the American State Department, whose entire confidence it has at all times enjoyed. The moneys now sent abroad are sent by permission of the War Trade Board, and are sent through the State Department in such amounts and to such points of distribution as are approved by these two Governmental agencies.

#### MAINTAIN WASHINGTON OFFICE

The Joint Distribution Committee is represented in Washington by Fulton Brylawski, who is at all times in close communication with the various departments of the Government.

The manner in which American Jewry has rallied to the support of the Jews stricken by the war has evidenced a unity of purpose and a single-minded idealism which has brought together every section of Jewry in America in the common effort to assuage misery and suffering.

The fact that American Jewry alone is in a position to extend the requisite assistance and that this fact is thoroughly appreciated by the bulk of American Jews undoubtedly has had much to do with the generosity, magnitude and extent of the response to the appeals that have been made.

In addition to its general work of relief, there has been maintained by the Joint Distribution Committee a Transmission Bureau, through which relatives of those in the war zones may directly transmit moneys to their wives, parents, brothers, sisters and other relatives. In the early days of the war, vast quantities of food, clothing, medical supplies and other aid were sent direct to the Jews in various parts of Palestine and Poland, and even after the United States entered the war, the Joint Distribution Committee was successful in bringing to America hundreds of refugees of American citizenship, from Palestine, who were cared for by agents of the Committee in the long journey from Jerusalem.

## TRANSMISSION WORK OF THE JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

| <i>Sent to</i>               | <i>No. of<br/>Rem.</i> | <i>Amount</i> |
|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Russia.....                  | 9363                   | \$189,828.43  |
| Austria.....                 | 870                    | 15,564.41     |
| Occupied Territory.....      | 12274                  | 288,691.01    |
| Palestine and "Various"..... | 2151                   | 113,724.47    |
| Total.....                   | 24658                  | \$607,808.32  |

## REPORTS SHOW WIDESPREAD DISTRIBUTION

Exhaustive reports showing the disbursement of funds in hundreds of villages, cities and towns in all sections of the war zones have been received by the committee, from time to time, and the variety and extent of the work of alleviating the sufferings of the men, women and children, are remarkable. Soup kitchens have been established, orphanages reared, hospitals equipped and even the rabbis and scholars have been cared for in special ways through the munificence of the help afforded by America.

In the main, however, the money raised by American Jewry has gone chiefly for bread, for hunger has been the chief thing to be overcome. Starvation has everywhere been rampant and it has been the first act of the Joint Distribution Committee to remedy this condition.

Former United States Consul to Jerusalem, Otis A. Glazebrook, indicates in a report dated as early as July 21, 1916, how dire was the need and how great has been the relief afforded by American Jewry. In this report Dr. Glazebrook states:

Jerusalem has always been, even in normal times, rich in its poor population, living upon the charity of our brethren abroad. How much is this the case now, when all sources of income, which used to flow from all ends of the world to the Holy City, to each of her communities, of her institutions, and her "kolels," are stopped and replaced by the only possible remittances, which are the remittances from the Joint Distribution Committee. No wonder then that the disinherited ones have been looking to the American Relief as their only bright star.



The totals of the relief funds sent to the various countries since the outbreak of the war in 1914 are:—

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Russia . . . . .  | \$2,812,300.00 |
| Poland . . . . .  | 5,376,662.98   |
| Austria Hungary . . . . .   | 1,583,700.00   |
| Palestine . . . . .   | 1,571,485.86   |
| Turkey . . . . .  | 616,004.30     |
| Alexandria, Palestinian Refugees . . . . .                        | 56,394.84      |
| Greece . . . . .  | 91,021.88      |
| Servia . . . . .  | 22,500.00      |
| Servian Jews in Switzerland . . . . .                             | 2,000.00       |
| Roumania . . . . .  | 135,900.00     |
| Bulgaria . . . . .  | 18,500.00      |
| Tunis, Algiers and Morocco . . . . .                              | 9,000.00       |
| Students and writers in Denmark and Switzerland . . . . .         | 11,200.00      |
| Destitute Families of Russian Jews in France . . . . .            | 5,000.00       |
| Spain-Turkish Refugees . . . . .                                  | 8,000.00       |
| Japan-Russian Refugees in Yokohama . . . . .                      | 80,000.00      |
| Persia . . . . .  | 26,700.00      |
| Kosher Food for Jewish Prisoners of War in Internment Camps . . . | 15,500.00      |
| Advanced a/c Refugees from Palestine . . . . .                    | 12,298.12      |